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PRESS RELEASE

USAID Helps Regional Business Networks

A Regional Finance Fair and Matchmaking Event is taking place in Skopje on June 14 and 15, bringing entrepreneurs from across South East Europe together with investors and other finance providers to explore specific finance opportunities and expand business networks in the region. USAID's Partners for Financial Stability (PFS) program and Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) are co-hosting the event, with over one hundred entrepreneurs from Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia participating.

Prominent finance and business professionals are leading sessions examining such topics as innovative finance and investment products in a post-economic crisis environment, venture capital, finance for agribusiness, and financial consultants. These will be followed by informal networking opportunities and pre-arranged matchmaking activities between investors and entrepreneurs – providing participants an optimal venue to network and build new business relationships.

Mr. Joseph Lessard, USAID Macedonia Economic Growth Office Director, highlighted the achievements of the USAID Macedonia Competitiveness Project in assisting over 120 firms to access finance and increase their competitiveness over the last two years. He added that he was proud “to see that our success has been recognized and that PFS and RCI are looking into expanding our financial matchmaking model to a regional level.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993 to create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.

USAID Partners for Financial Stability (PFS) is a regional project that supports financial sector development by bringing together regional players from “Partner” and “Mentor” countries to address regional challenges, promote the adoption and implementation of international best practices, and share experience and lessons learned. Primary beneficiaries in South East Europe and Eurasia are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. USAID PFS partners include the Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association, Crimson Capital, and CEED Macedonia.

USAID's Regional Competitiveness Project (RCI) strives to improve competitiveness across Europe and Eurasia by engaging the bilateral efforts of USAID Missions, USAID Projects and other local stakeholders. Through a regional approach, USAID RCI increases the cooperation between competitiveness and economic growth programs, leading to increased trade and job expansion in host countries. USAID RCI effectively coordinates activities and enhances information sharing between different stakeholders (USAID, other donors, public and private sector organizations) in selected sectors.